The Theosophical FORUM

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OUR ARTICLES:

	PAGE
REGENERATION	201
THEOSOPHY AND EVOLUTION	202
THYSELF AND THY KING	208
MAN	211
MYSTERIES	214

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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM

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REGENERATION.

The Self, son of Bharata, is a river whose fords are righteousness, whose waters are truth, whose banks are conduct, whose waves are compassion. Let thy baptism be in the Self, son of Pandu, for not by water is the inner Self washed clean.

Every attachment is to be given up by the Self; but if thou art not able to give it up, then let thy attachment be with the good, for attachment to the good is healing.

Every desire is to be abandoned by the Self, but if thou art not able to abandon it, then let thy desire be towards freedom, for this is the healing of desire.

THEOSOPHY AND EVOLUTION.

The etymological significance of the word evolution implies an unfolding—a gradual development—by successive steps, from the simple or rudimentary to the complex or complete. In all forms of organic life the beginning of the development of the individual is in the germ which as now known and demonstrated, pre-exists in the parent, and which contains within itself all the possibilities of the future fully formed organism.

From this it follows that the thing evolving or unfolding must be contained in that which is evolved. And further, as all evolution is made possible by the co-existence of life and consciousness, therefore the substance which is made to contribute to an unfoldment must also be endowed with vitality and consciousness.

In the growth and development of all organisms every kingdom of Nature takes part. The plant draws from the mineral kingdom the elements needed and, with the aid of heat and moisture, synthesizes them into chemical compounds which it builds into its own organic structure. In like manner does the animal kingdom derive the material for growth from both the vegetable and mineral world. This is only a portion of the idea, conveyed by the word evolution, but it will serve as a starting point.

If then, all things can be and are made contributory to the manifestations of life and consciousness, all things must possess a life and consciousness of their own—and this postulate carries us at once into the domain of the Universal, and the fact is at once recognized that evolution cannot be limited to any one form or specialization of existence. This is the Theosophical teaching as given in the Bhagavad Gita: "Whenever anything, whether animate or inanimate is produced, it is due to the union of body and soul. He who seeth the Supreme Being existing alike imperishable in all perishable things, sees indeed. ..... As a single sun illuminateth the whole world, even so doth the one Spirit illumine every body."

The conception of existence, therefore, may be summed up as the idea of consciously being and becoming. The consciousness here referred to need not be, and in fact, except in the higher and more complex forms of life, seldom is, accompanied by intelligence. But

that consciousness does exist apart from a rational intelligence is abundantly proved, not only by every day observation, but by the results of scientific research. It is inconceivable that what we know as inanimate matter, which enters so largely into animate things, and without which life itself could not persist, should be devoid of the qualities and attributes which it so largely confers; for, in the constant exchange of material which is inseparable from the processes of physiological life, and even of mental activity, inanimate matter would be incessantly undergoing a transition from the living and conscious to the not-living and unconcious states. Even if this could be considered possible, the fact that every organic structure can be and is, finally, resolvable into inanimate elements, mineral and gaseous, which are rapidly utilized in the inception or growth of new forms, only emphasizes the existence of vitality and consciousness in all things.

These facts force us to the conclusion that what is recognized as the evolution of the individual is merely a part of the application of a general law which controls all things, in other words, the Universe. What this law is, Science has failed to make clear; its workings and results have been studied and fully recognized in its effects as probably due to a force inherent in living things, but like the operation of other forces of Nature, its scope and application are limited to the most obvious demonstrations; outside these limitations, there has been mainly speculation.

Theosophy, recognizing the existence in all things of Body and Soul—Life and Consciousness—bases the law of progress or evoluion upon the struggles of the Soul, which is divine in its origin and essence, to give expression to itself in intelligence; in other words, each Ray of Consciousness, being a direct emanation of the Divine, must return to its Source and in its efforts to do so, it must elevate itself by successive stages to a point where such reunion is possible.

The reasons why these Rays from the Divine are imprisoned in matter and must make the obligatory return pilgrimage, are given in the "three fundamental propositions" of the Secret Doctrine which, as giving the best and really only conceivable rational basis for any theory of evolution, may well be repeated here in summary.

"No. I. An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable

Principle, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and can only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought—in the words of the Mandukya, 'unthinkable.'

"II. The Eternity of the Universe *in toto* is a boundless plane; periodically the playground of numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing, called 'the Manifesting Stars,' and the 'Sparks of Eternity.'.....'The appearance and disappearance of Worlds is like a regular tidal ebb of flux and reflux.'

"This second assertion of the Secret Doctrine is the absolute universality of that law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow, which physical science has observed and recorded in all departments of nature. An alternation such as that of Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleeping and Waking, is a fact so common, so perfectly universal and without exception, that it is easy to comprehend that in it we see one of the absolutely fundamental Laws of the Universe."

"III. The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul, the latter being itself an aspect of the Unknown Root; and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul—a spark of the former—through the Cycle of Incarnation, or Necessity, in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law, during the whole term."

"In other words, no purely spiritual Buddhi—Divine Soul—can have an independent, conscious existence before the spark which issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth Principle—or the Over-Soul—has first, passed through every elemental form of the phenomenal world of that Manvantara, and second, acquired individuality, first by natural impulse, and then by self-induced and self-devised efforts, checked by its Karma, thus ascending through all the degrees of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest Manas, from mineral and plant, to the holiest Archangel."

The essential character of these three fundamental propositions of the Secret Doctrine as a perfectly logical basis for any possible conception of a harmonious, progressive evolution, is shown in the fact that they are supported by any conceivable illustration from all departments of philosophy or physics.

De we question the existence of an "Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle?" No very deep thought is

required to show that it must be accepted as a premise for all speculation and as the basis for all being. Upon this conception, whether expressed or implied, are founded all systems of religion or philosophy; "dwarfed" it is true, "by human expression and similitude," as the personal God of the Church, but more often postulated in the profounder philosophies as the "Absolute," the "Unknowable" and the "Eternal All."

Is there doubt of the "law of periodicity as one of the absolutely fundamental Laws of the Universe?" The existence of a present and a future implies the necessity of a past, for there can be no endless succession of present and future. If there is a future to be lived in, there must have been a past that was lived in and that past must have been a future to some antecedent past, and so on back to Infinity.

If we descend from universals to particulars and consider the manifestation of individual life, we find, as stated above, that the germ of each individual pre-exists in the parent; so, as each parent had in turn also parents, we again arrive by the same route, at the same destination—Infinity. What Infinity is, defies speculation since it "transcends the power of human conception." It must be accepted, however, as the source and end of all things, since any line of reasoning, whether looking to the past or to the future, leads us inevitably to the Infinite and Unconditioned. This is the central idea or concept, running through all systems of philosophy, to greater or less degree, though appearing under different names and varying with the point assumed as the beginning of specialization.

Spencer, whose system of philosophy embodies the culmination of all that is best in the thought of the world, gives great emphasis to the conception of evolution as a process of change from the Universal to the Particular, from the Homogeneous and Undifferentiated to the Heterogeneous and Specialized. His recognition of the universality of this law, applying it to the individual as well as to solar systems, grouping all evolutionary processes under the one all-embracing term, Cosmic Progress, although differing in the point of view, is identical with that of the fundamental propositions of the Secret Doctrine. Like the Secret Doctrine also, his philosophy carries with it no conception that any process of evolution is actually unlimited as to time, but that the process of differentiation from the

Homogeneous once begun, goes on from the simpler to the more and more complex to final completness, when the reverse process carries back all things to the state of homogeneity from which they were evolved. This cycle of manifestation and disappearance, he refers to as evolution and dissolution and, in a limited sense, it is seen to be closely analogous to the Theosophical teaching of the Manvantara and Pralaya.

None of the accepted theories of evolution recognize the existence in so-called inanimate things, of either life or consciousness, dating their first appearance in those organic beings endowed with a nervous system; differing widely in this from the third fundamental proposition of the Secret Doctrine.

The use of the terms matter and force is closely analogous it is true, with the corresponding assumption embodied in the Theosophical teaching, but it is not identical. Matter and force are assumed to be permanent and indestructible, but also unchangeable except in manifestation, conditioned solely by environment; in other words, by their relations with other forms of matter and force. Both remaining always the same, the only theory of evolution that is possible under this hypothesis is that progress is synonymous with complexity and that complexity has an inherent tendency to simplicity. This might be accepted as a theory if it provided for the absolute harmony of relation in the gradually increasing complexity of structure which is such a necessary factor in the continuance and reproduction of special types. Although in all forms of the idea of evolution, from that of the early Atomist down to the theories accepted in our time, force is recognized as inherent in matter and inseparable from it, and that one is inconceivable apart from the other, there is entire absence of the conception of a superior controlling power—superior in the sense of being above, though not necessarily separate from structure.

If however, we follow closely Spencer's speculations upon the evolution of specialized forms from the Universal to the particular, through all grades of progress from the lowest to the highest and back to the Universal or Homogeneous, we shall find that we need not accept his conclusions as to sub-vital conditions, for his own statement that the idea of the Universal is a purely subjective one, seems to carry with it the key to the whole problem of evolution.

Thus, each specialization from the Universal, carrying with it a more or less definite conception of its own subjective existence as a direct inheritance, and inseparable from it, must necessarily and by virtue of the very impulse to differentiate which gave it birth from its parent substance, continue under the influence of its own subjectivity, to the point where re-absorption into the wholly subjective is possible. This would seem to supply a reason for the Cycle of Necessity, and, as each ray of subjective consciousness must be continuous from its first differentiation to its final re-absorption, manifesting in all grades and gaining all experiences, a succession of re-births—the Eternity of the Pilgrim—re-incarnation—is a logical necessity.

Man, as a physical organism, is supposed—and rightly so—to be the consummation thus far, of material evolution. Having reached the point in physical perfection where further evolution is impossible as a direct result of the first impulse to evolve—the determined out of the indeterminate, of Spencer—he entered into a further portion of his heritage, ages ago and became a living, rational Soul, having acquired the Fifth Principle. From that time on, his regaining the Sixth and Seventh Principles necessary to the complete and Divine Man, has depended and will depend upon his own "self-induced and self-devised efforts." This, as I understand it, is Karma; automatic in its action in the lower grades of existence and recognised as the law of cause and effect, but becoming more and more under the direction and control of the human will and aspiration as the individual acquires greater and greater responsibility.

THYSELF AND THY KING.

"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom."

We were talking of lucent intervals, when the primeval sunlight breaks through our clouds: here is the record of one of them. In the new birth, the door to real life, it is not fated that these dearly beloved personal selves of ours shall enter in, after undergoing some betterment and amelioration; as an old bonnet is renewed, a piece of ribbon here, a flower there, a skillful touch over all, and the miracle of regeneration consummated.

With us it is not like this, but quite otherwise. Everything we habitually consider ourselves to be, our whole normal selves, must melt away and dissolve in light, leaving not a wrack behind. Nothing that comes within our ordinary consciousness at all; nothing even of better hours but a few high and shining intuitions is good enough to "inherit the kingdom"; or, to speak sober prose, is large enough to enter into real life. I do not want to flatter us, but it seems to me most of us are finely gifted and endowed for our tragi-comedy of shadows, so much so, that these delicate perfections of ours are quite unsuited for the valor and vigor of real life—therefore they will never get there.

When the new birth is spoken of, we hear much of giving up ourselves and living for others. Here is only half a truth, and that the lesser half. It is not at all as though I should step forth from the throne of my heart, and invite my neighbor to take a seat there, while I meantime admire myself for being good. It is not as though I should open wide the doors of my house, so that they of the highways and hedges may come in, while I stay outside on the doorstep. That is something like the danger of the mansion swept and garnished. All this is merely imitating effects, without possessing the cause.

When I step down from the throne of my heart, with a comely feeling that I am a not quite adequate occupant, it will not be to give place to my neighbor or any human guest, however pious and worthy, but to make way for a divine and mightier power, of great majesty and mirth; a power whose glowing light has been shining through these clouds of my making for ages past. Myself and my

king—that old immortal self whom I have dimly felt, standing behind and above me, masterful and persistent. Whose purposes, which are my real purposes, have shaped all these many-colored incidents of my life; knowing that my fantastic mind would learn the real in no simpler and more direct way. My king, unquestioned, from self-evident majesty, and yet my real self. The self immortal, through whose dwelling already in real life, comes my possibility of new birth and inheritance there; though of this personality of mine I can see very little that is likely to share that inheritance. It must dissolve and melt away, quite completely and without reservation. It cannot "inherit the kingdom." And after all, once you get used to the thought, there is a great satisfaction in thinking that this discreditable old friend is to stay behind—if complete disappearance can be called staying anywhere. One knows too much about him—has too much evidence as to his character, as the courts phrase it, when unearthing something particularly disagreeable. If this poor relation were to come into the fine company of the real, it would be perpetually necessary to hide his shabbiness behind things, to keep him in dim corners—an unending embarrassment.

So the personality, practically the whole of what we ordinarily suppose ourselves to be, must become permeable to the light, until it melts away in the light altogether. Thus it must give place to the immortal self, but not to any other power at all. It is of no avail to build up an artificial self of private and individual virtues, of self-consciously doing good and being good, to our own great admiration and humility. The real virtues, the valor and excellence of reality, are to be as little our private property as the ocean-depths or the sun-beams are; they are to be virtues, large, cosmic, universal. It is very likely, indeed, that for a personality of private and self-conscious virtue there is least hope of all; and for this reason, perhaps, there is greater joy over one sinner that repents than ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance—or at least who believe they need none, and thus shut themselves out by a hard shell of humble self-satisfaction from the great, real world of being. One thing, perhaps, is more futile and foolish than this sun-proof canopy of virtue, and that is, the vices which we, the enlightened, are tempted to permit ourselves, in order to keep ourselves quite safe from self-righteousness, from the sense of possessing a private hoard of good

works. If even fine virtue, when self-admiring, is foreign to the real, how much more vices, which are not fine at all? These contemptible things are quite invisible to the large, sane, and healthy life of the real, and not less invisible are the contemptible personalities who indulge in them.

Virtuous or vicious, therefore, this very dear usurper, this much-admired and greatly-pitied personal self, must consent to become quite diaphanous; first like a net in the sunlight; then gossamer that melts altogether into the glow. That is how the transformation appears to the real self, how it rightly should appear. But it would be comic, were not we ourselves so implicated in it, to watch the startled apprehension of the personal self, the lower man, when it first dawns on his mind that a speedy disappearance is what is most expected of him. We are too much the lower self ourselves to quite enter into the humor of it, except perhaps where other people are concerned.

A word about those good neighbors of ours, for whom we are unwilling to prepare the throne of the heart. They deserve, and shall receive, compensation. Indeed their part is taken, very mightily taken, by that very self and king who stands immortal behind us, perpetually reminding us that they are our other selves. Reminding us that we must not, presuming on our present enlightenment and superiority, forget for a moment that these others are our very selves, on pain of the keen mortification of waking up some morning to find that they are ahead of us, offering us the good-natured compassion which we would have extended to them. One of the chief works which lie before the real self, now to be installed in lawful sovereignty, is to establish a true relation with these our other selves, instead of the chaos of petulant preferences and detestations which has separated them from us hitherto. They must be received into our hearts; yet after the real self reigns there, not before. And to be truly received, they also must be transformed; till we know them, no longer subject to sorrow, but a serene, august company of immortals.

MAN.

(An Eastern Fable).

Once Allah the omnipotent descended on earth, taking the appearance of the humblest of men, and, coming to the humblest of villages, entered the humblest of houses, which belonged to Ali.

"I am tired, I am faint with hunger," said Allah, "let a traveller in."

Poor Ali opened the door and said:

"A tired traveller brings a blessing to the house, come in." Allah came in. The family of Ali were seated eating their supper.

"Sit down," said Ali.

Allah sat down. Everybody took a portion of their own supper and gave it to him. When they had finished eating, all the family got up to pray. The guest alone did not rise and would not pray.

"Don't you want to pray to Allah"? said Ali.

Allah smiled.

"Do you know who is your guest?" he asked.

Ali shook his head.

"You told me your name was traveller. I don't want any other."

"Know then who entered your house," said the traveller. "I am Allah."

And he shone like lightning. Ali dropped down on his knees before Allah and exclaimed with tears:

"What did I do to deserve this blessing? Are there no rich and mighty in the world? We have a high priest in our village; we have Kerim the headman; we have Mahomet, the rich merchant. Yet you have chosen the humblest, the poorest of all. Blessings be on your name."

Ali kissed the foot-print of Allah and as it was late everybody went to bed, but Ali could not sleep. All the night he tossed about thinking. All next day he was thinking too. At supper he was still thinking and could not eat anything. When supper was over, Ali could restrain himself no longer and said:

"Don't get angry with me, Allah, for I want to ask you a question."

Allah nodded.

"I wonder," said Ali, "I wonder and cannot understand it, we have a priest in our village, a man of learning and of wealth; on meeting him everybody bows to the ground. We also have Kerim, the headman, with whom the Governor of the province stops when passing through our village. We also have Mahomet, the rich man, so rich as very few people in the world. He would serve you on gold plate and let you sleep on swan-down, and, instead of all these, you came to Ali, the pauper, the beggar. Is it that you are very fond of me Allah, eh"?

Allah smiled and said:

"I am."

Ali laughed and said:

"How glad I am that you are so fond of me; oh how glad I am."

That night Ali slept well. Merrily he went to his work and merrily he returned home and sitting down to supper he merrily said to Allah:

"I want to talk to you after supper, Allah."

"All right," said Allah.

When supper was over and the wife had cleared the dishes, Ali merrily addressed Allah:

"Then you are very fond of me, Allah? Eh"?

"Yes," smiled Allah.

"Eh"? went on Ali chuckling. "There is the priest in the village whom everybody reveres; there is the headman; there is Mahomet, the rich man, who would have piled pillows for you up to the ceiling and who would have slaughtered ten sheep on your account, and you came to me, to the pauper. Then you must be very fond of me. You just tell me?"

"Yes, yes," answered Allah smiling.

"What's the use of saying 'yes, yes,'" insisted Ali, "when I want you to tell me *how* fond you are of me."

"Yes, yes, yes, I am very fond of you," said Allah, and smiled again.

"Very"?

"Yes, very."

"All right, Allah, let's go to bed."

The following day Ali went about smiling. His thoughts were very gay. At supper he ate for three, and after supper he patted Allah's knee.

"Do you know what I am thinking, Allah? I'm thinking that you must be awfully pleased that you are so fond of me, eh? You just tell me frankly, aren't you awfully pleased"?

"Yes, awfully," answered Allah and smiled.

"I should think so," said Ali. "Well, brother Allah, I know exactly how it is. With me it is so that if I am fond of a mere dog I am always pleased to see it; yet I should think there was some difference between me and a mere dog. I can just imagine how glad you are to see me, such a good, righteous man; your heart must be jumping for joy."

"It is," said Allah; "let's go to bed."

Next day Ali was very thoughtful. He sighed at supper, looking at Allah and Allah noted that furtively Ali wiped a tear.

"Why are you so sad, Ali," asked Allah when supper was over.

Ali sighed.

"I am thinking about you, Allah," he said. "What would become of you, if I was not in the world? What would you do without me? See how windy, how cold it is outside, and rain is beating as if with sticks. If I were not such a good, such a pious man, where would you go? You would freeze in the cold, in the wind; not a thread on you would be left dry; and now here you sit in the warmth, it is dry here, it is light; you have had something to eat—and why? Just because there is such a good man as me in the world, to whose house you can go and so not perish. How lucky you are, Allah."

At this Allah could stand it no longer. He laughed aloud and disappeared from sight, but on the place where he sat there was a great heap of gold coin.

"Mercy upon me," exclaimed the wife of Ali, "what is this? I did not know there was so much money in the world. I'll go mad with joy."

But Ali waved her aside, counted the gold pieces and said:

"He need not have been so stingy."

MYSTERIES.

What is to be done to restore the Mysteries? Who is to restore them? These and other similar questions, crowding one's thinking apparatus all of a sudden and with a great rush, could not but raise a great big cloud of dust, in the midst of which one's bewildered eyes seemed to read: "Impossible!"

But the cloud of dust resuming its natural position under one's feet—as all the clouds of dust are sure to do sooner or later—one's thinking apparatus resumed its natural function—that is, thinking. And soon it remembered the invariable morals of all its previous difficulties: in all cases of doubt and trouble there is nothing like going straight to some reliable source of information. And what better source of information about ancient Mysteries than some good book about antiquity in general; let us say, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines,* for instance, or, still better, the translated works of Plutarch.

And I must own that the bewilderment of my particular thinking apparatus was greatly relieved when it found out, in a purely scientific work, that Mysteries, in their Eleusinian shape, not only had real, matter of fact, undoubted existence, but that, during many long centuries, they were the most important, the most widely-spread function of national and social life. In fact, the initiation of the first degree seems to be nothing but a kind of baptismal ceremony, obligatory on all respectable and self-respecting humdrum ladies and gentlemen of ancient Greece—for we need not imagine that, being born in the midst of a heroic and mythical land, they all were heroic or mythological; surely most of them were just as humdrum as ourselves.

To the Eleusinian Mysteries of the first degree everyone had access. Slaves, who had no rights before law or society whatever, had the right not to be expelled, in case a kindly disposed master had brought them inside the hall where the Mysteries were enacted. Ladies of doubtful and even undoubted bad character could be admitted, with certain reservations. Babies in arms could pass the

first degree of initiation long before they could possibly realize the importance of this step, provided the parents of these babies were influential enough to procure for them this, so to speak, preparatory initiation.

Besides, it seems that the Greeks, who kept the Mysteries all to themselves, were just as vaingloriously proud of this exclusive right as any of us born Christians are inclined to take an unfounded pride in the fact of our being born in a Christian land, whereas the heathen were not. Proud eyes are always inclined to magnify the purport and size of the object of their pride, which general rule, applicable to the moral life of all epochs and all countries, brought about the two following facts: (1) Alexander the Great declaring that there was no privilege or achievement of his he valued more than being an initiate of the Epoptic Mysteries, and so glorifying them in the eyes of humdrum mortals; (2) Diogenes, his contemporary, saying in his cynical way, that, so far as he, Diogenes, was concerned, he could not quite see why it should be that Patæcion, a highway robber, but an initiate at the same time, was sure of his salvation, whereas Epaminondas, the benefactor of Thebes but a non-initiate, was not. By which saying the "cynical nondescript" of Macedon's brilliant era tried to check the too ready belief of his compatriots in the saving influence of the mere ceremony of initiation. And we have not to go so far back into antiquity to see the fatal influence on human character and general human progress of all such too implicit beliefs in any ready made mechanical ways to salvation.

So far there is nothing very mysterious in the Mysteries. Nothing but a close analogy to a condition of things just as widely spread and as well known in our own family and social life in Europe and America. A wise man was he who said: The more it changes, the more it remains the same.

And the analogy between these remote epochs and our own will be still more close when we come to see that then, as now, behind an apparent aspect of things there always was and is a deeper one, less visible and yet more true. Initiation to the Mysteries was not merely an act required by the customs of a popular religion, for behind the initiation of the first degree there was an initiation of the second degree, and yet an initiation of the third degree.

It was of the second or Epoptic initiation that Alexander the Great was so proud, that when Aristotle published his *Metaphysics* the young king repraochfully wrote to him:

"Alexander sends greeting to Aristotle. You have acted wrongly, having given out to the world several works about the acroamatic philosophy (the same as Epoptic). What difference will there be between me and others, if everyone is to learn a teaching into the Mysteries of which I was initiated? A knowledge of the most important I prefer to exterior power. . . ."

To which Aristotle gave the problematic answer that the abovementioned works were "published and yet not published." Meaning most probably that without a certain preparatory training and some knowledge of symbols and metaphors no one could possibly derive any good from his *Metaphysics*.

But as to the Mysteries of the third degree we of the glorious civilized era can make only feeble conjectures, at best succeeding in dovetailing the guesswork of ancient and modern writers.

"Not everybody knows what the hierophant is doing," says Theodoret the ancient; "most people only see what is represented. They who are called priests accomplish the rites of these Mysteries, but the hierophant alone knows the reason of what he is doing and discloses it to those whom he thinks proper. . . ."

"We know positively," says Lenormant the modern, "that for the hierophant and the *dadouch* (an intermediary between the hierophant and the crowd), on taking up the functions, there was a regular ordination, accompanied by a new and special initiation. . . . And it is perfectly evident that it was in this supreme initiation they received the doctrinal tradition. . . ."

Originated a good many centuries before Christ—some scientists say in the archaic times of purely mythical Greece and by a purely archaic demi-god—and continued far down in our own era, so far down, in fact, as to have several Neo-Platonists for their hierophants, and as to be well but not wisely abused by many Fathers of the Church, the Eleusinian Mysteries, for a wonder, managed to keep all their secrets pretty dark.

"What!" protests our natural scepticism, "slaves, untrained in the noble art of self-control; ladies of both good and bad repute, and even irresponsible infants, managing to keep a secret between

themselves, and these throughout long, long centuries? Surely this is contrary to all our notions of human nature."

To this very natural questioning I have two answers; one a quotation from Sopater, a writer of the sixth century A. D., another evolved out of my own inner consciousness.

"The law punishes with death anyone who would reveal the Mysteries. A person to whom the initiation appeared in a dream asks one of the initiates whether what he saw conforms to reality; the initiate acquiesces with a nod of the head, and for this he is accused of impiety. . . ."

Surely no law, be it ever so severe and implacable, could hold good against the irresistibly human inclination to talk about things that interest us most. Penalty of death or no penalty of death, the ladies of ancient Greece, gentlemen not excepted, *did* talk about Mysteries it was their good fortune to witness, this possibly being the only point about which I personally have no doubt whatever in the whole great variety of subjects I am going to touch upon in this article.

But, then; Mysteries just like Aristotelean *Metaphysics* were *published and yet not published.* There exists a wondrous law in the interior moral as well as intellectual life of human beings, a law which permits a great scientist to give out the whole of his most precious discoveries to the most skilled shoemaker, and the shoemaker none the wiser for it, and the discoveries of the learned man just as secret as before.

Ladies and gentlemen in peplums and togas talked and talked and talked. Ladies and gentlemen in French bonnets and frock coats talk and talk and talk. But how many amongst either could tell exactly what they were and are talking about, when "the hierophant alone knows the reason of what he is doing and discloses it to those whom he thinks proper"; be this hierophant a man as in the Eleusinian Mysteries, or the spark of God as in the inner mysterious operations of our souls and minds.

Then, just as now, many or even all were called but few were chosen. And the chosen ones surely can be entrusted with keeping a secret. Do not all, who hungrily seize upon every manifestation of their inner souls, who long to hear the soundless voices of their higher minds, know how difficult, how impossible it is to impart these

shapeless, evasive, yet intense and real impressions to our most intimate, most loved friend, unless this friend can see and hear for himself? The Mysteries remained secret throughout the ages, not because this or that hierophant wanted them to remain so, but because it is a part of their most essential nature to be and to remain secret.

Surely the penalty of death could be applied only to those of the revealers who had something to reveal, the initiates of the second and third degree; possibly only the latter, as history tells us that Aristotle had revealed the Epoptic Mysteries and lived to die his natural death.

For the millions and millions of people who had witnessed the Eleusinian and other Mysteries, they most probably remained only what they apparently were, that is to say, to use Plutarch's words, "marvellous illumination, elegant decorations of the whole place, singing and dancing which tempered the majesty of sacred words and holy apparitions." That is to say, pretty much the same thing as in most established churches, whether Christian or heathen, on the whole extensive surface of our extensive globe.

And so when my thinking apparatus was asked the question: What are the Mysteries? it was given a problem much greater than it—or any other thinking apparatus indeed—could possibly solve, so long as it remained unhelped by other constituents of the human mind. And it is exactly these other constituents of the human mind the Mysteries of all countries and all epochs address in their veiled yet intense and beautiful language.

Here are several quotations from several ancient and modern authors to testify to the truth of this statement.

Synesius, the rare example of a Neo-Platonist and Christian bishop combined, says:

"Aristotle is of the opinion that the initiates did not learn anything in a precise way, but that they received impressions; that they were put into a certain disposition, for which they were prepared."

Prepared, we may add, by a certain training, about which no one is positive, and by a certain diet about which everything is known, and which most strictly forbade flesh either of mammalian, bird or fish, for the time being, as well as certain vegetables. And

as a French writer remarks, "these abstinences were not founded, as with the Christians, on a principle of mortification; coming rather from certain mystical notions attached to the aliments, the use of which was forbidden."

In the following words of Plutarch there also is to be found an indirect allusion to the Mysteries:

"I listened to these things with simplicity, as in the ceremonies of initiation, which carry no demonstration, no conviction operated by reasoning."

Gallienus speaks thus on behalf of Nature:

"Give me, therefore, all thy attention; more than if, in the initiation of Eleusis or Samothrace, or some other sacred Mystery, the whole of thee was in the performed acts, in the words spoken by the hierophants; not considering this other initiation [the study of Nature] inferior, neither less capable of revealing either the wisdom, or the providence, or the power of the Creator of the universe. . . . For, to my mind, amongst men who honor the Gods, taken either in the totality of their nations, or individually, there is nothnig comparable to the Mysteries of Eleusis and Samothrace. And yet these Mysteries show what they propose to teach only in a kind of twilight, whereas in Nature everything is in perfect brightness."

Then the Frenchman Guigniaut, in his *Religions de l' Antiquité,* says that "this was not a direct, rational, and logical teaching, but a teaching indirect, figurative, symbolical, which for all this was not any less real."

In the German work of Edwin Rohde is to be found a statement that "symbols, as well as dramatic performances, aimed at representing the state of bliss which was to be reached by the initiates after death."

All this answers more or less the question as to the subjects of the Mysteries. But needless to say, no one knows exactly what were the glorious sights and sublime words spoken of in a dim way by many initiates, including Plutarch.

Now to the second question one's bewildered eyes beheld in the cloud of dust, a question the more important as before answering it no one could seriously and honestly talk about anything like the restoration of the ancient Mysteries: If such a thing were possible what is to be done to restore the Mysteries?

At this point, I must ask all sincere and straightforward people to try and help me out of this very difficult situation by looking for the answer in their own hearts. If they promise to do so, I shall feel encouraged to say that, though I have no "direct, rational and logical" data for the following statement, yet my answer most decidedly is: *The resurrecting of our dead higher imaginations is strongly to be recommended.*

A NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

It becomes my duty as treasurer of the T. S. A. to remind its members that under the ruling of the present constitution, our organization relies for its financial sustenance upon their *voluntary contributions*. The system thus established has proved fairly successful in providing for the inevitable deficit in the expense account of our publications; but to support the measures undertaken and desired to be undertaken by the Secretary to enliven and extend the work for which the Society exists, it will be necessary for us to be more liberal in our donations. This suggestion does not apply to the particular few upon whom the treasurer has heretofore relied to come to the rescue in case of emergency, but is directed towards those good people usually in the majority who, believing it to be "more blessed to give than to receive," are self-sacrificing enough always to be willing to let the blessing accrue mainly to the other fellow.

Money intended for Theosophical purposes may be sent to the undersigned, who will in all cases immediately acknowledge receipt thereof. Remittances may be made in bank notes, by draft on New York, (other checks cost from ten to twenty-five cents for exchange), or preferably by Post Office Orders.

A. H. SPENCER,
Treasurer T. S. A.
Box 1584, N. Y.

TO OUR READERS.

There are many among our readers who feel an impulse to write something, either as a comment on something in THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM, or following up some new line of thought. Very often, and very wrongly, they resist this impulse, through lack of self-confidence, or, perhaps, mere laziness.

We invite these future writers to begin at once. We shall be very glad to receive and consider anything they may send us. If THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM is to be read, it must first be written; and we should keep in mind that, in our Movement, we learn by teaching, and teach by learning.

THE EDITOR,
Flushing, N. Y.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

Notice of the time and place of the Convention will be published in the March number of THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

According to our Constitution "The Government of the Society is vested in its members in Convention assembled" and "any member may vote at Convention either in person or by proxy." Our Conventions have always been held in April, and that month will no doubt be chosen this year. Therefore you are requested to consider any plan of work or suggestion that you think would prove of value to the Society, and present the same in person if possible at the Convention, or send them in writing to the Secretary to be presented by him. In the event of your not being able to be present at the Convention, make out your proxy in time, send it to the Secretary. The arrangement of all this business will take a great deal of the Secretary's time, so you are requested to send your communication at once or at your earliest convenience. It is hoped that all who can manage to do so will be present at the Convention, and that branches will make a point of having at least one of their members present.

Fraternally yours,

THADDEUS P. HYATT,

Secretary T. S. A.

Box 1584, N. Y.

TO THE SECRETARIES OF BRANCHES OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

A report of the activities of your branch during the past year is requested, with a complete list of the members and their addresses and the names of the officers. Also please state whether or not your branch has a library, and if it has, state the number of volumes.

Fraternally yours,

THADDEUS P. HYATT,

Secretary T. S. A.

Box 1584, N. Y.